

THE ZOOLOGIST

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SOME FISH-NOTES FROM GREAT YARMOUTH FOR 1905.

By A. H. PATTERSON.

THE fish entries in my 1905 "note-book" are not of that varied and interesting a character which I could have wished; I have this year to regret more a scarcity of curious or strange fish taken by our local shrimpers than a want of interest on their part. Those queer examples which have been obtained came to hand more for the sake of the inducements held out than from motives of curiosity.

In March-end four examples of the Ballan Wrasse (*Labrus maculatus*), of the green variety, were taken off Yarmouth, each about the size of one's hand; and a most beautiful specimen, 11 in. in length, of a decided venetian-red colour, was procured for me by Mr. Robert Beazor, a Yarmouth fish-salesman, from a "wolder" fishing out of this port.

On April 25th I happened to be passing an obscure little fish-shop, when I observed a pile of fish just shot out of a "trunk." Amongst them I counted nearly a score of Streaked Gurnards (*Trigla lineata*), quite a number of Sea-Bream (*Pagellus centro-dontus*), and some vividly coloured Red Gurnards (*Trigla cuculus*). There was also a small Cuckoo Ray (*Raia miraletus*). These fish had been caught by a Newlyn boat, had been despatched to Lowestoft, and sold to a Yarmouth fish-dealer—in so roundabout

a fashion has this erstwhile prosperous trawling port now to obtain enough deep-sea fishes for its inhabitants. In a public-house hard by I saw a dried specimen of the Armed Gurnard (*Peristethus cataphractum*). I could get no satisfactory evidence as to whence this Mediterranean species came, but in all probability it had been taken off the Cornish coast.

Saw a Lemon Sole (*Solea lascaris*), 10 in. in length, on a fish-slab on May 2nd, and a Flounder weighing 1 lb. 4 oz. near to it.

Several fishes showing marked deformities have come to hand during the year. A peculiarly stunted Sapphirine Gurnard or Tub-fish (*Trigla hirundo*) was brought me by a fish-hawker on May 22nd; of a total length of 11 in., the head measured $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. I obtained a 13-inch Haddock very much humped, with a couple of "rounds" on its back, that gave it a very Camel-like contour. The vertebræ had in two places coalesced, forming a couple of knots the size of acorns. An 11-inch Codling, with a curious bend at the posterior end, was taken off one of the piers on Oct. 14th, and still another about a week after.

Several Twait Shads (*Clupea finta*) about the size of a Herring have been taken with the Herrings in the drift-nets during the present fishing; and I have reason to believe that a very fine Salmon met with a like fate. I found the head of one washed up on the beach in a particular locality that favours this supposition.

An exceedingly large Fishing Frog or Angler (*Lophius piscatorius*) was brought in by a shrimper on May 25th. Observing a group of men gathered around some object on the quay side, I joined them. They ventured some marvellous opinions upon the unwieldy thing, and, knowing my "propensities," expected me to add to the discussion, which I did. I asked the shrimper to overhaul the fish's "pockets." "Someone's been over 'em a'ready!" said he; "but theer worn't nothin' in." I have known five Soles to be turned out from the strange pouches the Angler carries. The men did not know what to do with the soft flabby monster, which weighed a good half-hundredweight. My suggestion that they should eat it met with some doubtful shrugs of the shoulders. Local shrimpers would as lief eat donkey-meat as experiment on a strange fish.



An Eel-catcher, who had netted a number of Eels in a ditch on the Breydon marshes, sent me, on May 28th, what he considered to be the ovary of a large example he had taken. It was, however, only the stomach of the fish, crammed with eggs of the Three-spined Stickleback that had been most industriously collected by the unfortunate fish.

A fish answering to Willoughby's Red Mullet (*Mullus barbatus*) was exposed for sale with a number of the Surmullet on June 6th. They had been sent from the west coast. I have never yet met with a locally captured example.

On June 8th I had a small Rose Perch (*Scorpæna dactyloptera*), $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length, brought me by a shrimper; and on July 4th a hybrid Turbot-Brill, about three pounds in weight, came to my notice.

I regret that "draw-netting" (seine-netting) has here become yearly less pursued; a few men in the finer months occasionally do a little of it, but no purposeful following of it obtains. The catches having proved so unremunerative seems to be the cause of this. I saw a draw-net hauled in on July 22nd by some beachmen and sportive visitors. The "catch" was of small account, only a few edible species being taken. I enumerated the following species:—Fifteen-spined Stickleback, Yellow Goby, Atherine, Greater Sand-launce, Smelt, Eel, Pollack, Flounder, Skate, Herring, Five-bearded Rockling, Viviparous Blenny. They were mostly very immature examples.

A strange fatality overtook thousands of Eels, many of them very fine ones, during the exceedingly hot weather that prevailed in the latter half of July. Their decaying corpses bestrewed the river sides, and became entangled among the Broad-side reeds, presenting a most unsightly exhibition. Various causes were assigned—the pollution of the rivers by sewage matter, and the influx of carbolic acid from the drains; but these agents would not have been responsible for the mischief done in the Broads. I think the abnormally heated mud and consequent excessive decay and quick decomposition of aquatic vegetation had not a little to do with the "turning up" of these most sensitive fish. The Eel-catching on Breydon, and in the neighbourhood generally, has been a very poor one for the local fraternity.

The most remarkable "sport" I have yet obtained was a

hybrid Holibut-Plaice, which I met with when casually passing a fish-shop. The unusual bluish-ash colour of the fish, spotted with the familiar orange dots, at once arrested my attention on Aug. 17th. "How much?" I asked the vendor, taking it up from the slab. "Thrippence!" said he, laconically. "It's mine," I replied, as the fellow packed up the specimen in a newspaper, with the remark of its being "a rummy kind of a fish!"

The fish was 16 in. in length, very like a Holibut in the shape of its head, and a Plaice in the body. The eyes were straw-coloured, and the under side of the fins surrounding the fish were peculiarly sprinkled with white, as if a brush of whitening had been carelessly passed along them. The texture of the skin below was very like that of a Holibut.

Some time during the last week in October a small three-stone example of the Sunfish (*Orthagoriscus mola*), which had become entangled in a Scotchman's herring-nets, was brought to the wharf, where it caused much comment and considerable speculation as to its name, habits, &c. I heard about it the same day it was taken, but had no chance of seeing it, for it was snapped up by a fish-dealer for four shillings, and promptly despatched to London with other fish, possibly just to exhibit on a fish-slab as a "draw" or novelty. I heard that it brought the original purchaser a dozen shillings profit. Probably by this time it has gone the way of the rubbish-box, and been forgotten. It does seem a great pity that rarities amongst fish merely gratify a passing interest, and "the incident closes"; whilst a rare bird, less interesting from a naturalist's point of view, and comparatively much commoner, arouses competition for its possession, and sets one section of the scientific—or, at least, the collectors'—world in commotion.

I have reason to think that the interest I have shown, and to a certain extent "worked up" among the local fish fraternity, has borne fruit, for as soon as I made my appearance on the wharf, after a week's interval, quite a number of fish-people surrounded me, and sought my opinion, one man taking me to a rough pencil-drawing scrawled on one of the fish-merchant's office-boards, and a bit of humorous and dialectic argument followed; but everyone was satisfied when I gave them a correct

"lightning" sketch on a leaf of my pocket-book, wherein the Sun-fish's huge dorsal and anal fins were placed astern of it, and the odd little "button-hole" of a mouth depicted at the other end. My drawing and extempore "lecture" left them all knowing something of the beast, and good-humouredly satisfied. By such means has one to arouse a bit of interest in the hope of future favours.

Early in November a purely white Thornback Ray was landed at Lowestoft in a trunk with other "offal." I did not manage



"BULL-DOG" CODLING.

to secure it, as it was purchased by a fish-dealer and despatched inland. Two or three of my fisher-friends saw it, but were too late to secure it.

On Nov. 24th a codling belonging to that queer variety known as "Bull-dog" fish—so named from the deformity of its head—was caught on a line off the Britannia Pier by Mr. E. Boning, of this town. I have rarely met with similar malformations in the Cod, Haddock, and once in the Sapphirine Gurnard.*

* Cf. 'Zoologist,' 1897, pp. 275-6 (figure).

Notwithstanding the greater pollution of our local rivers and Breydon by sewage and other noxious matter, it is a fact that Smelts still ascend to the fresher waters, and on the "flats" afford local smelters with occasional good catches. I was looking on at three of them "drawing" on Nov. 8th. Amongst their catches they were—and so was I—astonished at seeing a goodly-sized Scad (*Trachurus trachurus*) kicking about. This I secured for a friend who is interested in plaster-casting local fishes. It is the first taken on Breydon of which I have any record. The same men took several Sprats, also most unusual there, although plentiful in November off the Suffolk coast.

A Twaite Shad, $14\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length, was taken on Nov. 18th in the nets of a Scotchman; how this Chub-headed fellow managed to gill itself in so small a mesh, and remain there, is one of those problems that wait solution.

The Herring fishery this season has produced little of interest from a naturalist's standpoint; the Herrings have been of excellent quality, and a fairly good catch has been made. But those rapacious fishes, *e.g.* Sharks, Dogfishes, and larger enemies in the shape of Porpoises and Dolphins, have been conspicuously absent, only two or three Porpoises having been landed. The plague of Dogfishes which has proved so disastrous on our southern coasts this autumn would seem not to have affected in the least the interests of our local fishermen.

NOTES ON THE ORNITHOLOGY OF OXFORDSHIRE,
1903.

By O. V. APLIN, F.L.S.

(Concluded from p. 417.)

April 20th.—Men saw ten Wild Geese, going E., fly over the village about 9 a.m. Magpie's nest of three eggs. I have known the eggs very hard sat by the 21st. A Swallow near Trafford Bridge. When I got home from Otter-hunting I found one sitting outside the barn-loft door ; I opened it, and the bird went in at once, and remained there. Swallows always breed there, and I have no doubt it was one of our own birds.

22nd.—Three Gulls at Wickham, flying east.

23rd.—Hounds killed an Otter on the Evenlode near Puddlicote. Saw three House-Martins (early), Ray's Wagtail, Tree-Pipit, and a Wood-Wren travelling along a railway hedge near Charlbury. The Evenlode valley is earlier for migrants than we are here. Cold day and slight snow shower.

25th.—Very few migrants here. News of nests of seven and four eggs of the Coot and of one egg of Little Grebe seen near Eynsham yesterday.

26th.—A pair of Stonechats in Milcombe gorse ; I have not seen one in this old haunt of the bird for a long time.

27th.—Restart and Ray's Wagtail. Long-tailed Tit's nest with eleven eggs.

28th.—Blackcap.

29th.—Driving Mr. Whitaker down to Ettington, we saw a male Brambling near Alkerton, a very late date for it to be here. We noticed Sand-Martins at a breeding place, but could see no hedge-warblers except *Phylloscopi* until we got into Warwickshire and down Edge Hill, where were several Nightingales, and we heard the Cuckoo at Ettington.

Rainfall 1.96 in. on nine days this month.

May 1st.—Cuckoo here.

2nd.—Lesser Whitethroat common and noisy. Kestrel had four eggs at "Rignall." The Sparrow-Hawk bred in 1902 in a small belt of spruces between here and Barford, and the year before in the spinney by the brook here, so low down that the nest could be touched by any one standing on the ground. With every one's hand against it this bird is becoming very uncommon.

4th.—Floods everywhere. Garden-Warbler and Whitethroat.

5th.—News of a Bittern shot near Eynsham last winter.

6th.—Country—uplands and all—very wet; great floods all down the Cherwell valley; very stormy weather.

7th.—Violent hailstorm between here and Banbury, but did not reach us; it cut the leaves off the trees, and hail like this must surely kill some small birds. Floods very big. The Long-tailed Tit, like some other resident species, seems unusually abundant this year. A friend told me he had found no fewer than five nests just round his house, South Newington Hill, and added that he had hardly ever seen more than one in any year previously.

8th.—Shot a few young Rooks. They are rather early, and there were some strong flyers. One with a white chin and the distal half of the lower mandible white. A Wryneck has been about the Paddock-walk for a week. No rain all day; the 24th ult. was the last fine day.

9th.—There are three if not four Wrynecks about the village—an unprecedented circumstance, for the Wryneck is almost a rarity here now. Torrents of rain again, and the lower part of the village flooded.

12th.—The last two days cold and wet. This morning almost a frost, and we gladly left home for a month.

Rainfall, 5·05 in. fell in seventeen days. A dry warm May is always desired here!

June 14th.—I can only see one Swallow about these premises. It is reported that 2·9 in. of rain fell at Oxford to-day.

16th.—Floods. The pastures "squelch" as you walk, with muddy water; the furrows are full of water, the brooks brimming, and the low meadows flooded. Maximum temperature sometimes below 50°.

19th.—In a fine interval I examined the Sand-Martin colony

at Tadmarton. The nests, chiefly lined with large (often white) feathers of the domestic hen, contained incubated eggs or young. The old man (Ed. Preedy), who has worked many years in the pit, and takes an interest in the birds, says they come there the end of April, but not all at once, and some stay until the end of September, but most of them go earlier.

20th.—Mr. Warriner, of The Grove, writes : “ The floods are coming out in the hay-meadows for the fifth time this summer.”

25th.—Ray’s Wagtail young on wing ; they call like the old birds, and their stumpy tails wag quickly.

26th.—Warm weather at last. Natterer’s Bat flew in at a window.

28th.—A pair of Red-backed Shrikes have bred this year in the old locality, “ Milton lane close.”

29th.—I went to Bampton, but found the towing-path of the Isis impassable, as water was running over it in places. A very strong stream running. The country in this low-lying district was in a deplorable condition. Many fields were still covered with water, others with slime left by the floods, and then baked by the sun into a dirty white crust. These fields (all hay-grass) cannot, of course, be mown, and will probably be ruined for years. The biggest flood was caused by the great three days’ rain between the 13th and 16th inst. There were seas of hay-grass along the river, all of which ought to have been cut, and much of which was hopelessly damaged. The luxuriant herbage on and inside the raised banks of the river was all covered with slime, and all nests must have been destroyed. It is a great breeding-place of Reed-Buntings, and many Moorhens and Dab-chicks nest among the rushes in the river; but I saw few other birds. The hedges and ditches on each side the raised road between Bampton and Tadpole Bridge were very lush, and seemed full of Sedge-Warblers and other small birds. Larks were numerous in the fields there, and came to dust themselves on the raised marsh road. The land is so flat there that a great extent of ground had been flooded ; and the driver of the omnibus which runs between Bampton station and village told me that the water on the road was up to his horse’s collar, and it was dangerous to get about the country for a day or two. I spent a delightful time watching an adult Black Tern feeding over the river. Time after

time it worked slowly up a reach of the river against the wind, flying quite low, and then, getting up into the air, it dropped back on the wind to work up again. Several times it dipped in the water with its beak, but I could not see that it took fish; from the quick turns and twists it made in the air I thought it was catching insects. Sometimes it hovered, and one weedy bit of river it always passed over very slowly, and only a few inches above the surface, beating its wings a good deal, and making little darts at something. Its turns and twists were executed with great quickness, and it was quicker on the wing and extended its wings more than the marine Terns. There were many Swifts around it, but it did not suffer much in comparison of wing-power, though of course not so fast. Swallows mobbed it. When all this district was marsh—not so very long ago—it is very probable that the Black Tern was a breeding species, and that the birds which so often come up the Thames in spring are revisiting an old haunt. I saw a flock of quite a hundred Peewits, but only two or three mobbing birds; possibly some of the late young were drowned. Practically all the eggs, and the young which could not fly, of the ground-building birds must have been destroyed over a large extent of country—for miles, indeed, in various directions from Oxford. I heard one Corn-Crake, and saw several Herons, all flying towards Clanfield, where there is, or was, a small heronry. Mr. Darbey had a female Hobby, trapped at Sandford Brake on the 9th; the male escaped.

30th.—Saw and heard a Reed-Warbler in South Newington osiers. It is very uncommon in this part of the county.

Rain to the amount of 3·85 in. fell on nine days this month.

July 1st.—Mr. W. W. Fowler told me that the Barred Wood-pecker had bred this year in an old dead stump in the Botanic Garden, Oxford. He had seen the young being fed.

4th.—Cuckoos very scarce this summer. I have heard none since the latter end of June. News of a nest of young Pied Woodpeckers nearly ready to fly in Wychwood Forest.

10th.—Goldfinch building in apple-tree; probably a second nest.

11th.—Curiously enough, House-Martins are more numerous than usual.

17th.—A Turtle-Dove's nest with two fresh eggs had a distinct lining of clover-stems.

18th.—Torrents of rain, the outskirts of a thunderstorm, broke up the spell of fine weather which has lasted with hardly any fall since June 21st. Thereafter the rest of the year was terribly wet.

19th.—Pair of Barred Woodpeckers very noisy about the garden, and I think have young in a big walnut tree just the other side my wall.

20th.—Preedy brought two hard-sat clutches of Sand-Martins' eggs he had uncovered when getting sand. Less than a year afterwards he was killed by a fall of sand and earth in the pit.

22nd.—There fell at Bloxham Grove, 18th-21st, 2.91 inches of rain.

29th.—Numbers of Garden and other Warblers in the kitchen garden now.

31st.—At Langley Mr. Calvert showed me a Linnet's nest built in the side of a straw-rick three feet from the ground. The nest was nearly all wool, but on the open side there was an out-work of clover-stems. It contained four eggs. Linnets are abundant in the high-lying country round there (formerly part of Wychwood Forest), but breeding accommodation is rather limited, for stone walls almost entirely take the place of hedges. I may mention here that when shooting at Langley early in October, we found in a potato-field an old Linnet's nest built in the middle of a potato-plant on the top of the ridge. Just now Linnets are destructive to kale-seed now being harvested, and we saw flocks among the plants. In the early morning Corn-Buntings were dusting with the Larks on the road.

Rainfall 5.11 in. on fifteen days.

August 2nd.—Starlings are singing again in the morning.

8th.—Corn-Bunting singing. A few apricots ripe. Birds very destructive to fruit, notwithstanding the wet season.

11th.—When Otter-hunting on the Cherwell saw a Green Sandpiper at Twyford Bridge.

12th.—Still much hay out and some fields uncut.

13th.—Found an Otter on the Evenlode between Handborough and Charlbury, but lost it. A big flock of Peewits on the high ground near Langley.

14th.—Charlbury. Very heavy rain in forenoon. A strong drag above Bruern Abbey, and put down three Otters near Bledington Mill, of which we killed a bitch of 16 lb. or 17 lb., and a dog of 21 lb. or 22 lb. Some Swifts still here.

16th.—Sparrows eating apricots on a wall tree as fast as they ripen.

19th—Greenfinch and Goldfinch sing well; the latter still nesting.

20th.—A Swift went into a hole under the eaves of a thatched cottage and stayed there.

21st.—Some Swifts. Of the Swallow tribe (now much in evidence in the evenings) about this evening, four-fifths were Martins. I think nearly three-fourths of the Swallows perished in the spring. Song-Thrush sang, full and well. Goldfinches sing all about.

22nd.—Some Swifts. The features of this wet summer are the general scarcity of summer migrants, especially Cuckoos and Nightingales; the great scarcity of Swallows and the comparative abundance of Martins; and the irregularity in nesting and in the period of song.

23rd.—Our few peaches are being eaten, unripe, by snails and birds, and apricots have to be gathered unripe for the same reason. Snails and slugs, which swarm, have eaten up all my young lettuce and cruciferous plants. I have done some good by turning young Ducks into the kitchen garden; but why are the resident birds—so numerous—apparently almost useless?

24th.—Torrents of rain. Seven Swifts together.

25th.—Only 52° at 9.30 a.m. Swifts still screaming over the garden.

28th.—A Kestrel turning over old horse-droppings.

29th.—Wheat and oat harvest now very general, the corn having ripened fast the last few days. A good many Swifts. Mr. Warriner tells me he put up three Snipe on the 22nd in what is usually a dry meadow, but now fast becoming a swamp. Also that early in the month he saw fifty or sixty Duck settle in flooded hay-grass near the mouth of the Sorbrook.

30th.—Chiffchaff in song.

31st.—Stonechats have bred this year in Milcombe gorse; I saw both young and old to-day.

Rainfall 8.51 in. on fifteen days.

September 1st.—Partridge-shooting did not open to-day, the harvest not being far enough advanced. Swifts here, and screaming, high up, at evening.

2nd.—Some Swifts; their late stay is remarkable.

4th.—Several Whimbrel heard passing at night; a still cloudy night, moon big.

7th.—When on the high ground near Tadmarton Heath I saw an adult Herring-Gull, which flew past rather low down against the fresh W.S.W. breeze.

8th.—Evidently a very bad Partridge year; on a very small beat which has yielded ere this eight or nine brace in a day, we saw to-day only three old birds. Probably most of the birds deserted their nests in the terrible spell of wet cold weather, June 13th–16th, and it is probable that many old ones died.

10th.—A destructive gale at night from S.W., and three-quarters of an inch of rain.

11th.—A great many Mistle-Thrushes on Bloxham Grove—a flock of about thirty in some potatoes.

15th.—An unusual number of Mistle-Thrushes in the fields.

16th.—Only 45° at 9.30 a.m.

17th.—Flocks of Meadow-Pipits, and many Mistle-Thrushes.

23rd.—Owls very noisy at night lately. Besides the numerous Brown Owls, I hear occasionally the Barn-Owl, which seems more common this year than it has been lately.

24th.—Chiffchaff has sung for some days. I do not think any Swallows and Martins have gone yet, but the congregations on the roof on one or two mornings lately have been very small compared with those in some years.

25th.—Sixteen Partridges killed at Milcombe comprised eleven old and five poor young birds. We got two Land-Rails in tall weedy Dutch clover on high ground; this is late. Five were killed near Hook Norton on the 9th, and some were seen at Milcombe when barley was cut. All these must be *passing* migrants. Some Pipits to-day. The fresh skin of a young Dotterel was brought to me by a friend, who shot it on the 22nd as it flew over his head in a turnip-field at Sibford; this is the only local Dotterel I ever handled. Seven and five Snipe have been shot near the mouth of the Sorbrook, and Mr. E. Colegrave saw one as early as the end of July.

26th.—Chiffchaff still singing in garden.

28th.—The wet and cold notwithstanding, we have had a few butterflies; three Red Admirals close together in the garden to-day, and a few all the month; a Peacock on 25th; and one Painted Lady before the cold pinch.

Rainfall 2.07 in. on eleven days.

October 1st.—Many Song-Thrushes in turnip-fields. Flocks of Linnets in thin weedy swedes, and some Meadow-Pipits.

5th.—Torrents of rain and very stormy early; the country very wet. Meadow-Pipits swarming in turnip-fields, and some roosting in grass. Many Song-Thrushes in hedges and turnips. Hardly any reduction yet in the numbers of Swallows and Martins. Larks singing all about, as also on the 1st.

6th.—Another storm. Much barley, cut and uncut, out. One of the fine old walnut-trees at Milcombe is much decayed, and in it Mr. E. Colegrave has found the following nests at one time, *viz.* House-Sparrow, Tree-Creeper, Flycatcher, Starling, Stock-Dove, and Great and Blue Tits. In other years there have been nests of the Jackdaw and Redstart. Two fine old plane-trees on the banks of the Swere at Barford used to hold a small rookery, and were frequented in the breeding season by Starlings, Jackdaws, Tree-Sparrows, and the Barn-Owl, which I have seen emerge from one of the larger hollows.

7th.—Mistle-Thrush sang a little.

9th.—At Langley, on the high ground, many Pipits in turnips and kale, and a good many Thrushes; flocks of Linnets. A Stonechat on a wire-fence; they do not breed there. Mr. Calvert told me he saw eight Quail on Sept. 8th, and shot one; the rest went into standing corn; he heard one calling in the spring. On the 2nd inst. he shot a Land-Rail, and saw another in long benty grass the next day. About the end of last month he saw a Curlew fly over. Mr. Fowler writes from Kingham on the 9th, "Still young Martins in the nest over my bedroom window." The Evenlode valley partly flooded, and rushes growing in the meadows.

11th.—Torrents of rain, and low part of village flooded again.

13th.—To Hook Norton to see a Shag which was seen to alight on a mill-pond near there on the 8th, and was caught alive. A good many Martins here, and some Swallows here

and at Hook Norton. Wheat still out, and lots of barley and oats.

17th.—Grey Wagtail in ditch at Milton.

19th.—Red-legged Partridges are even more scarce than our own birds. The country is terribly wet, and the gateways surrounded with mud and water. Some barley not cut, and this and oats rotting on the ground. A Fieldfare flew over, and three others settled in a stubble-field.

20th.—Two Martins over the village.

22nd.—A flock of Crossbills reported as seen in the larch spinney near Tadmarton Heath yesterday. I went up to-day and the next day, but could not find them. A fine red male was sent to me from over the Warwickshire borders. A Long-eared Owl was trapped in this spinney in the summer, and liberated. It is very rare as a breeding species in this part of the county.

23rd.—Came suddenly on a female Sparrow-Hawk on a gate near Lower Tadmarton.

24th.—A pair of House-Martins hawking near the railway-station all the afternoon. Goldfinches singing.

25th.—Very stormy; wind, rain, and lightning.

26th.—Stormy and heavy rain. Only one Martin about.

27th.—Torrents of rain.

28th.—In the twenty-four hours ending at 9 a.m. this morning, 1·6 in. of rain fell. The little valley through the village is a river! The Sorbrook valley is a series of lakes from Wickham to Adderbury. Found the remains of a Stock-Dove just outside an oak spinney on Bloxham Grove, which appeared to have been killed and partly eaten by a Peregrine.

29th.—Very big flood in the Cherwell valley.

31st.—The wettest October I remember. To Somerton to look at the flooded valley. A team of Duck, one or two Herons, Moorhens, and two small flocks of Peewits, were all the wild-fowl I saw, except an immature Golden-eye busily diving in the deep water of the huge lake now covering Clifton "Moor." Seventeen Fieldfares in one lot. One over the garden this morning. I passed, at Adderbury, part of the scene of the destructive wind-storm of the 25th, which, coming from the direction of Swerford, missed this village almost (passing to the south), and, passing the Grove and Adderbury, extended towards Warkworth. The

width of the storm was very slight, but in its course large trees were rooted up or snapped off, and many had the appearance of having had their tops twisted out of them. It occurred at about 8.30 p.m.

Rainfall 6.21 in. on twenty-six days.

November 1st.—There was practically no frost last month. The garden is full of flowers, including sweet peas and dahlias, and scarlet runner beans are still gathered.

4th.—A female Stonechat catching flies from a hedge in Grove lane.

5th.—Dense fog in forenoon. To Wallingford to see the collection of local birds belonging to Mr. W. Newton, of Crowmarsh Battle. The following information about birds in that part of the county I received from him, partly then, and partly in a letter from him to Mr. H. Noble, kindly lent to me by the latter.

Carrion-Crow.—Still numerous in the Thames valley there.

Hoopoe.—The bird recorded by Clarke-Kennedy as shot at Wallingford about June 18th, 1867, was really killed at Ewelme, Oxon, by Mr. J. P. Franklin.

Buzzard.—Mr. Newton believed that a pair bred in recent years at Swyncombe, as they were about there for some three years in the early eighties, in the late Col. Ruck-Keene's time, who was a great preserver of all Hawks and Owls. [I may add now, that when staying a few days at Watlington, in the spring of 1904, I was assured by the landlord of the ancient and famous Inn where I lodged, that two Buzzards had been hanging about the woods on the hills in the previous winter.]

Kestrel.—He found a nest in a wheat-rick, where the Rooks had pulled out a sheaf or two just under the eaves. A Rook had been killed, and the carcase hung up to keep others away, and the Kestrel was sitting on her eggs within a few inches of the dead Rook.

Osprey.—He saw one fishing in the Thames, and watched it for some time, and saw it plunge right into the water three or four times from a height of forty or fifty feet; it did not, however, catch anything. From Mr. Newton's companion on this occasion I learn that this occurred close to some big elm trees near Benson lock, in the first or second week in September,

1899. On my way back from Wallingford, I called to see Mr. Darbey in Oxford, and *à propos* of this he told me that some years ago (probably twenty, he was then in Market Street) he stuffed an Osprey for Mr. Tyrrel, of Water Eaton, who shot it. It was seen to plunge into the Cherwell, and as it rose it was shot. It did not fall at once, but carried the Roach it had caught with it until it fell. The Roach was preserved with it.

Pallas's Sand Grouse.—Alluding to the fine male and female in his collection, part of the 1888 immigration, Mr. Newton remarked that he first saw a flock on the Sunday, and that on the next day he saw four or five flocks.

Quail.—Not so plentiful as formerly, and the enclosing of the old Common Fields, which did away with the "mere-baulks," as they were called, had much to do with this falling off in their numbers. They used to breed extensively in the parish of Ewelme, and one afternoon (Sept. 29th) he shot five couple. He was speaking of the old pointer days; there was a very strong scent to Quail.

Bittern.—One was shot there in September, 1856. It rose from a grassy hedge-bank close to one of the guns out Partridge-shooting.

Stone Curlew.—Mr. Newton has found the eggs several times on the Oxfordshire hills some two miles above Crowmarsh, but higher up near Nettlebed they breed extensively, and on English farm he used frequently to see flocks of fifty or sixty together, and only the previous year, in the parish of Ewelme, he saw a flock of quite that size. They "flight" down to lower grounds at dusk, and scream as they fly.

Ring-Ouzel.—Sometimes occurs in autumn.

Brambling.—Vast flocks frequent the beech woods on the hills in autumn, coming down to the lower grounds and farms later in the season.

Cirl-Bunting.—Nested twice on the flat bough of a deodara in a garden in Crowmarsh.

I examined the following birds, among many others, two or three of which I have already mentioned in my 'Birds of Oxfordshire.' I can now, however, add some further particulars of these:—

Red-breasted Merganser.—A female shot at Crowmarsh.

Black Tern.—Two (immature) shot on the river from a flock late in the summer. One was seen by Mr. Newton over the Thames in the summer of 1902.

Snow-Bunting.—A very fine adult male in winter dress shot there five and twenty years before. He had seen two or three since.

Dotterel.—Some fine adult local birds procured years ago. They still (in some years) appear on the hills in spring about the second week in May, and again from the middle of August to the early part of September. At the former season about five in a trip, at the latter up to a score or more. Two birds were shot locally early in September, 1902.

Rose-coloured Pastor.—The very fine adult bird shot at Ewelme some forty years ago, mentioned in my book. It was shot while feeding on cherries by a Mr. Greenwood, in whose possession it was for some years, and at whose sale Mr. Newton bought it, with a local white Hare (which he gave away). Mr. Newton gave me independent information relating to a Pastor, shot at Ewelme Park by Mr. H. Saunders on Oct. 20th, 1871, and preserved; recorded by "E. H.," Pyrton, Oxon, in the 'Field' of March 23rd, 1872.

Snipe.—A very fine "Sabine's Snipe," shot in July or August on Harcourt Hill. It is a very big bird, and we both thought it must have weighed fully seven ounces. It is a long bird, and more the shape of a Woodcock than a Snipe.

Hobby.—A pair of adult birds, shot in September.

Dunlin.—Shot at a little pond on Harcourt Hill.

Peregrine Falcon.—A very fine old female, with the upper part of the breast almost unmarked and tinted with salmon-pink. It is a pretty regular autumn visitor to the Thames valley and the slopes of the Chilterns, where they frequent big open fields, and when gorged, or on the watch, sit on the big clods of earth, when their light-coloured breasts make them conspicuous at a distance. When gorged they are fairly tame, and will let you ride moderately close to them. Mr. Newton had seen them knock down Partridges, but they also feed on Wood-Pigeons, of which there are large flocks about there at that season.

Brent Goose.—One, shot on the river. Mr. Newton considered this the commonest Goose on the river, and added that in the Crimean winter a great many visited that locality, as many as nine or ten being killed at one shot; they were in very poor condition.

6th.—Saw a male Sparrow-Hawk near Wroxton. Larks singing well. The season continues very mild, and the garden yielded tender young green peas to-day.

7th.—A white frost.

12th.—Barley still uncut.

28th.—Country very wet; ditches overflowing, and water standing in upland fields. In the valleys there are very big floods. I hear of a flock of about two hundred Wild Geese which passed over early in the month, and another of about fifty, which settled on the south side of the village a few days after.

Rainfall, 1.38 in. on eleven days.

December 1st.—Near Tadmarton, on a wheat-stubble, was the largest flock of Linnets I ever met with; it must have comprised several thousands. Also a large flock of Sky-Larks. Some Meadow-Pipits frequented a field of mustard eaten off by sheep. Cold and frosty weather the last two days.

3rd.—Several Crossbills have been shot recently in this parish. I have had three sent to me from over the Warwickshire borders.

5th.—I spent some time watching the Crossbills which frequent a small spinney, chiefly of larch, on the Grove estate. Six had been shot from the flock, and there were about a dozen there to-day. They were very tame, and lively active birds even this dull foggy morning. When feeding in the tops of the larches they settle on the slender twigs, and either rifle the cone there or bite it off, and fly with it to the upper side of a thicker branchlet, when, holding the cone under their feet, they pick it to bits or open the scales. Bits of cone were continually dropping, and whole cones often tumbled down; so much so that attention would by this be called to the presence of the birds on a still day. The ground underneath the trees was littered with rifled and whole cones which had been dropped. When biting

off or rifling an ungathered cone, Crossbills often hang head downwards, and in all sorts of positions, and they recover themselves with an upward swing, like a gymnast on a parallel bar. As they work about among the thicker growth of twigs their action is a sort of half-fly, half-leap, but they also climb in a way that suggests a Parrot. Although they feed in silence, when two or three fly to another tree they call to one another with a bright note sounding like "chep" or "chip," and quite peculiar to them. Their flight is fast, strong, and direct, and this foggy morning their strong wings made a noise as they flew. Sociable birds, they often fed within a few inches of one another, and there were five in one tree-top once. Besides feeding on the cones, they seemed to be biting at something on the twigs, perhaps insects of some kind. Two days later, when I went to look for them, they had gone.

10th.—Many Snipe reported from the flooded meadows near the junction of the Sorbrook, Swere, and Cherwell.

11th.—A fine male Stonechat on the hedge of a stubble-field at North Newington. Larks still singing. Saw two fields with the barley still out.

14th.—During a day after the hounds on foot I could not see a single Fieldfare, and have seen no Redwings yet. There are no haws to speak of this year. A good many Linnets about.

16th.—Mistle-Thrush sings well. Violets in flower.

18th.—Mistle- and Song-Thrush sang.

19th.—Many Linnets still frequent Milcombe gorse.

21st.—Winter aconite in full bloom, true to its day.

22nd.—A Woodcock in Milcombe bushes, and a Jack-Snipe and two or three Snipe at South Newington; probably flooded out in the bigger valleys, for they are seldom seen in any numbers up the little Swere valley. About fifty Fieldfares and three huge flocks of Wood-Pigeons, one of from one to two thousand, and the others of about a thousand each. Lark singing. Mistle-Thrush in fine song and plentiful. A fair amount of Song-Thrush music now, but not so much as one might expect from the number of birds still about; possibly some of them are only on migration.

27th.—Slight snow; a mist hangs over the soaked country.

28th.—In the Swere valley, near Wiggington, were fifteen or twenty Snipe in a wisp, and wild; a few others. Some Redwings, the only ones seen this season. A huge flock of Pigeons. Bullfinches common.

29th.—Saw a Sparrow-Hawk and a male Peregrine Falcon. Large flocks of Larks on stubbles. One Redwing here.

31st.—Many Pigeons still here. I have seldom seen so many small birds frequenting the stubbles as one sees now. Larks, Starlings, Tree-Sparrows, Greenfinches, and a good many Linnets. The mild wet autumn has kept them here.

Rainfall, 1·50 in. on fourteen days.

Rainfall for the year, 37·77 in.! From 24 in. to 26 in. is an average fall.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

MAMMALIA.

Remarkable Cats' Feet.—For some years past I have known of certain domestic Cats in Yarmouth remarkable for the unusual number of toes upon their fore feet. From observations I have made, and the particular neighbourhood in which these felines live, I am strongly inclined to believe that they are all more or less related. To



someone's great regret, no doubt, an intelligent young man of my acquaintance secured one of these (its colour shall be nameless), which he informs me *died rather suddenly* soon after; and there is a black specimen, which he believes to be unrelated, which he intended to capture at the same time, but that it gave him the slip, and has never been heard of since. He macerated the fore feet of the Cat that

"died," and has kindly furnished me with a remarkably good photograph of them. In every instance that I know the Cats' hind feet contain the normal number of toes. As will be seen, on the left foot are seven digits, and on the right six.—A. H. PATTERSON (Ibis House, Great Yarmouth).

AVES.

Nesting of the Dipper in Renfrewshire.—I found a nest of the Dipper (*Cinclus aquaticus*) in May of this year, containing four eggs. One of these I accidentally chipped, so I lifted it out with care. Incubation had been going on for about a week. I went off for a holiday, and returned a month later with my camera to photograph the nest. What was my surprise to find two addled eggs (which I took home and blew), and one dead young one. The mother had evidently been disappointed with the result of her labours, and left the whole thing in disgust. As the nest was by the side of a little waterfall built into the grassy bank in a lonely moorland, and could only be reached by walking up the bed of the stream, I do not think the bird would be disturbed.—T. THORNTON MACKEITH (The Hall, Caldwell, Renfrewshire).

White Wagtail in Northamptonshire.—When visiting Byfield Reservoir with my brother on July 19th last, I saw on the dry mud left bare by the falling water (the reservoir being nearly empty) an adult female White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), and three or four young ones still in the peculiarly delicate grey dress worn by them when they leave the nest. I have little doubt that these White Wagtails had been reared at the reservoir, the nest probably being built in a hole in the rough stonework which protects the banks from being injured by the wash of the water, and had this year been high and dry for months. The old female had, as far as I could see with the glass, no black on the top of the head, merely a dusky appearance.—O. V. APLIN (Bloxham, Oxon).

Increase of Goldfinches in Bedfordshire.—I notice (*ante*, p. 481) a note by Mr. Lodge on the increase of the Goldfinch in Middlesex and Herts. In this county (Bedfordshire) this increase is most remarkable. The bird has been scheduled for several years, and for every one that used to be seen there are now a dozen or twenty. Only this week I saw a flock of nearly thirty in the north of the county, and not far from the same place last spring I saw a flock that must have contained nearly fifty. I have also seen it in gardens well in the town; in fact, it breeds every year within the town boundary, in some elms on the path of one of the main roads. Whether it is also the result of the protection

orders, or what? Owls also are distinctly on the increase—at least, the three we have in this immediate neighbourhood—the Barn, Tawny, and Little.—T. PEARSE (Amphill Road, Bedford).

Tree-Sparrows in East Lothian.—The Tree-Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), still a local species in Scotland, though recorded from Berwickshire to Unst, is fairly numerous about several of the East Lothian farms. During winter it wanders to some extent from its headquarters, and has during the non-breeding season been recorded at least thrice from Midlothian. Behind the village of Gullane, on Oct. 21st, I saw a restless flock of Finches, and amongst them I had a good view of a Tree-Sparrow; but I believe that a large proportion of the birds belonged to this species.—R. B. WHYTE (7, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh).

Late Stay of the Swift.—Several notices have appeared lately in 'The Zoologist' regarding the late stay of the Swift (*Cypselus apus*) this year (1905), and I may further supplement the observations already recorded by stating that on Sept. 26th—a cold, wet, and disagreeable day—while at Worthing, a Swift flew into the second floor room of one of the Marine Parade houses. The unfortunate laggard "dumped" itself down on the carpet, from which it was totally unable to rise. I picked it up and tossed it out of window, when it dashed off into its element, apparently none the worse for its experience.—E. F. M. ELMS (24, Hugh Street, Ecclestone Square, S.W.).

Peregrine Falcon in Surrey.—On Nov. 8th a fine male Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) was shot at Nonsuch Park, Cheam, Surrey, about fourteen miles only from the Royal Exchange. It was brought to me in the flesh, and weighed one pound six ounces. Nonsuch Park is historically interesting, as the palace was built by Henry VIII., and ultimately pulled down by Nell Gwynne, to whom it was given by Charles II. in 1670. The park is still a large open one. On Oct. 15th, 1903, I also saw a Peregrine fly over my house in Sutton, which was being worried by Rooks.—GEORGE W. BRADSHAW (Hill Road, Sutton, Surrey).

P.S.—I find I have omitted to mention that I judge it was a second year's bird, as the feet were *yellow*, though the cere and eyelids were blue. I saw on Nov. 12th about a dozen House-Martins hawking for flies over the River Mole at Leatherhead, Surrey, where I met them this year on April 9th—a good long stay for a migrant.—G. W. B.

How does the Osprey carry its Prey?—In August, 1896, I had the

great pleasure of watching Ospreys fish in the River Kerni, in the north of Finland, and so am able to give some information in answer to the question asked in 'The Zoologist' (*ante*, p. 435). According to my notes made at the time, the fish was carried in a horizontal position, with the head pointing in the direction of flight.—HERBERT C. PLAYNE (Clifton College).

Baillon's Crake (*Porzana bailloni*) in North Wales.—An example of this rare species was caught by a dog in a ditch at Llangwstenin, near Colwyn Bay, on Nov. 6th. It is now in the hands of Hutchings, taxidermist, Aberystwyth, for preservation for the owner. Mr. Flower, Colwyn Bay. It is apparently a male, and measures over seven inches in length. The white outer primary distinctive of the species is well marked. The spot where it was taken is on the borders of Denbigh and Carnarvon, and is in the old bed of the River Conway, which in bygone times entered the sea to the east of the Little Orme's Head, instead of to the west of the Orme's Heads. So far as I can ascertain, Baillon's Crake has not hitherto been recorded in any part of Wales.—H. E. FORREST (Hillside, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury).

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna cantiaca*) in the Firth of Forth in November.—The Sandwich Tern is a regular summer visitor to the Forth, and attempts to nest periodically on Inchmickery. In autumn old and young are quite common on the northern shore of the Forth from Fifeness to Dalgety, as well as along the southern shores about Gullane and Dalmeny. Usually it departs by the middle of October, but this year I saw one still lingering at Dalmeny on Nov. 4th.—H. DRUMMOND SIMPSON (52, Queen Street, Edinburgh).

Leach's Petrel in Sussex.—A Leach's Petrel (*Oceanodroma leu-corhoa*) was picked up dead in the park at Beauport, Battle, Sussex (the seat of Major Sir Archibald Lamb, Bart.), and was sent to me for identification on Nov. 8th. The bird had no doubt been driven inland by the severe gale of the previous week. The species is purely oceanic, the only European breeding-place of note being St. Kilda. Besides about a dozen specimens for this county, mentioned by Mr. William Borrer in his 'Birds of Sussex,' three more are also recorded by Mr. Dawson Rowley as having been obtained near Brighton early in November, 1860 (*cf.* Dresser's 'Birds of Europe,' vol. viii. p. 498).—THOMAS PARKIN (Fairseat, High Wickham, Hastings).

Storm-Petrel at Yarmouth.—Two examples of the Storm-Petrel (*Procellaria pelagica*) have been brought to me during the present fishing season; in both instances they were wearied-out individuals

which had flown aboard fishing luggers. The first was brought me on Oct. 9th; it eagerly devoured portions of a broken Herring milt and roe which I held on my fingers, its head being continually shaken and its vertically held wings upon the flutter. It mostly seized minute portions, but occasionally "dug" and pulled at a milt as a Gull does at a stranded carcase. It died a day or two after. The second bird was equally exhausted, and far shyer, and most difficult to make feed. It persisted in moving around, much after the manner of a large moth, and when it stopped for a rest would sit with its long legs under it, much after the fashion of a Guillemot.—A. H. PATTERSON (Yarmouth).

Rare Birds in Norfolk.—On Sept. 21st, between Wells and Cromer, I flushed a bird which I at first supposed to be a very yellow Titlark. On securing it I found that it was a small Bunting, which proved to be an example of *Emberiza aureola*. The bird has been identified by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe and Mr. Howard Saunders, and was recently exhibited in London. The wind was N.E. The same authorities decided that a dark Stonechat, shot by my brother, G. F. Arnold, near the same place on Sept. 2nd, 1904, wind W.N.W., was a specimen of *Pratincola maura*. Both birds will shortly be presented to the Eastbourne Museum.—E. C. ARNOLD (Blackwater House, Eastbourne College).

A New Notts Bird.—A specimen of the Dusky Thrush (*Turdus dubius*) was shot at Gunthorpe, in this county, by a nursery gardener named Mills. He heard a bird in a willow tree calling a loud "chack, chack," something like a Fieldfare, but more shrill. When the bird flew out he at once saw that it was not a Fieldfare, as it flew more like a Jay. He fired, and killed it with his second barrel. When he picked it up he knew it was a strange bird, and took it to Bore, taxidermist, of Notts, where I saw it. There is no doubt that it is a Dusky Thrush, and is in very perfect plumage, and not only the first Notts specimen, but a new one to the British list. The bird was shot on Oct. 18th last, and was a male.—J. WHITAKER (Rainworth Lodge, Notts).

Rare Birds in Aberdeenshire.—A specimen of the Great Snipe (*Gallinago major*) was shot near the mouth of the River Ythan, Sept. 5th. It was so much injured by the shot that the sex could not be determined. Roller (*Coracias garrulus*): a female specimen of this straggler was shot at Auchmeden, near Aberdour, Sept. 9th. Its stomach was well filled with beetles and flies. Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*): A fine specimen of this by no means common

species with us, was obtained at the Ythan estuary, Sept. 12th.—
GEORGE SIM (Aberdeen).

Ornithological Notes from North Devon.—Perhaps it is not everyone's good fortune to see over half a dozen Ravens in an afternoon's ramble; yet in walking, last May, in the neighbourhood of Lee, I observed at least eight. Another I picked up dead, and on arriving at Ilfracombe I noticed still another on the Capstone Hill. Some weeks before I spent a very pleasant day at Baggy Point, where I was lucky enough to catch a young Raven, which had apparently only just flown from its nest. A high wind was blowing, and the youngster could only fly very short distances; consequently I soon captured him. He proved to be a most amusing bird. At first he was very angry with me, and snapped at my fingers, but he did no serious injury, although I was surprised at the power which he possessed in his beak. After a while I put him into my spacious inside pocket, and so carried him with me for the remainder of the day. On being first introduced to his new apartments he became very excited, and his muffled croaks sounded most sepulchral. By lunch-time he had quieted down, so I allowed him some fresh air, and a little meat from my sandwiches. The latter he greedily swallowed, but one particularly large piece stuck in his gullet, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he eventually removed it. Like a spoilt child he refused every consolation, and stood a few feet away, staring at me reproachfully with a cold blue eye—"quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.' " Certainly it is a step beyond the truth to say he did repeat that famous retort, of which an unearthly ancestor of his is represented as having once made use, yet he clearly meant it; for he defied all attempts at recapture, and when I left him he was seated on a wall, the wind ruffling his glossy feathers, and the rain beating across him in cold cutting sheets. I almost thought of tempting him into submission again by offering my muffler (!), but on second thoughts refrained, allowing my friend to battle with the elements as best he could.

Rooks and Starlings are very sagacious birds. I have often watched them hovering over the River Taw, and picking up any dainty morsels that happen to be floating by. One bird, however—a young Starling—met with a fatal accident in performing this clever little trick; his strength seemed to suddenly fail him, he fell into the water, and was carried away by the current. I finally saw him disappear beneath the surface. Starlings have long been known to catch flies on the wing, but last September I saw twenty or thirty Black-headed Gulls swooping over a large field, evidently flycatching. They were accompanied by

four Starlings, who were feeding in the same way. The birds were at too great a height to discern what the insects were. These manœuvres lasted for nearly fifteen minutes.

Bullfinches have this year been very numerous in the district, and gardeners have everywhere been complaining. I believe that the Bullfinch, in nine cases out of ten, destroys the bud in order to get at the insect pest within. But the gardener shakes his head, and fears "*Danaos et dona ferentes.*" I hope that the bad reputation of these birds will not serve to diminish their increased numbers.

Below are a few notes I have made during the past eighteen months or so:—

HEN-HARRIER.—The trapper of Braunton Burrows informed me that two years ago a Harrier was often seen on the Burrows during the winter, and on one occasion he almost stepped on it as it rose at his feet from a depression in the ground with a Rabbit in its claws. I presume this was the Hen-Harrier, although I think that Montagu's Harrier sometimes visits us.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE.—By no means a common bird. I have seen it at Hele, near Ilfracombe, where it breeds in small numbers. It has also been noticed at Bishops Tawton, but is usually found near the coast.

MISTLE-THRUSH.—As I stood looking into a nest of this species, containing young birds almost fully fledged, I suddenly heard a loud "whirr," and then I felt a bird beating its wings on the back of my head. I turned quickly round, and espied the old bird making a precipitate retreat. I wished her to renew this unexpected attack, so I remained where I was. However, she did not again actually touch me, but was contented to vent her wrath by making dashes every two or three minutes straight for my head, and then just at the right moment altering her course so as to sail clear. I have never heard of a bird of this description being so bold.

WHITE WAGTAIL.—A single specimen was seen this spring near the Braunton Lighthouse. It remained a very short time. The Rev. Murray Mathew, in the 'Birds of Devon,' calls this bird a regular spring visitor, but it has of late grown scarcer.

GOLDFINCH.—A local breeding bird. During the autumn and winter many are caught in the clap-net, which is very generally used by the professional birdcatcher. Apart from the destruction so caused to wild life, the play-birds are usually unmercifully attached to wire fasteners in order to be used as decoys, without the risk of their escaping. One nest which I had under observation was stormed

and captured by a pair of Sparrows. They found the cosy structure a very suitable foundation for their own untidy dome of straw and hay.

SWALLOW.—The continental style of nest I have often observed, especially under bridges in the marshes near Braunton Burrows.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER.—A pair of these beautiful birds were shot by a farmer in an orchard at Bishops Tawton this summer. It is a thousand pities that these rare birds should have been destroyed.

STOCK-DOVE.—I have found many nests of this bird in the sand-stone cliffs at Santon. Rabbit-holes are usually selected, and the eggs are laid on a very scanty nest of straw and bents built about a foot in. I believe that they have been observed nesting in Rabbit-holes in the sand-dunes near the Braunton Lighthouse. The Rock-Dove I have not yet detected. The Turtle-Dove is very uncommon, and I have seldom met with it. It breeds at Fremington, and this year I saw a young bird with the baby down still on it in the woods in the neighbourhood of Wraffton.

QUAIL.—Sometimes shot near Braunton, but this year a fine specimen was brought down at Bratton Fleming.

GREY PHALAROPE.—This graceful bird is of frequent occurrence on the mud-flats of the Taw, but in some years it is much rarer than in others. This winter they have been very numerous.

REDSHANK.—Uncommon. Last January there was a small flock on the low rocks beneath Baggy Point, and this autumn I saw a single bird on the Taw, near Heanton Court.

GREENSHANK.—Not met with nearly so often as is the foregoing. A solitary bird was seen this autumn on the mud-flats of the river opposite Fremington. It was exceptionally wary, and when once disturbed flew off, and was not again seen.

CURLEW-SANDPIPER.—In 1904 I distinguished a bird of this species on our river during the latter part of September. This September there were several in a large flock of Dunlin on the sands near Anchor Wood Bank.

LITTLE TERN.—Five of these elegant little birds visited us on May 5th, 1904. They were resting at the water's edge near the Hospital Ship at the mouth of the river. I had them under my glasses for nearly ten minutes.

SCLAVONIAN GREBE.—I have noticed one or two of these birds on the river for the past two winters, and I am inclined to think that they are regular winter visitors.

PUFFIN.—A friend and I saw three at Baggy Point last January. The weather was quite calm, and I cannot imagine what induced this oceanic species to seek the shelter of the coast at that time of the year. In the summer I picked up two dead ones on the sands at Santon after a gale. They are, of course, very common at Lundy during the breeding season.

PINTAIL.—About two years ago a fisherman named Mock shot several ducks of this species in the estuary of the Taw. I believe that they are now in the hands of the local taxidermist.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.—This and the Lesser Black-backed are constantly seen in the winter months on our river. They are said to breed at Lundy.—BRUCE F. CUMMINGS (Barnstaple).

V E R M E S.

Malformed Earthworm.—An Earthworm "with two tails," precisely similar to that figured in your Journal (*ante*, p. 398), but smaller, was exhibited at a meeting of the Hull Scientific and Field Naturalists' Club seven years ago by Mr. H. M. Foster, a local naturalist, who had obtained it whilst digging for worms at Hull. It is still preserved in spirits, but has shrunk in size.—T. SHEPPARD (Museum, Hull).

A Query.—Answers to some of the queries in your Journal by Major Barrett-Hamilton relating to Bats will be found in an article by Mr. A. Whitaker, "On the Breeding Habits of Bats," in the November 'Naturalist.'—T. SHEPPARD (Museum, Hull).

THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S GARDENS.

THE additions to the collection of Mammalia were neither numerous nor important during October. Two only are worthy of special mention, namely, a young male Arabian or White Oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*), more commonly but erroneously known as *beatrix*, presented by Colonel Scallan, C.B., D.S.O., and making the third specimen we possess of this species, which is somewhat rare in menageries; and a large and very interesting rodent, the African Cane Rat (*Thryonomys* or *Aulacodus swinderianus*), from Lagos, presented by Captain Macfarlane. This species, which is to be reckoned amongst the largest of existing rodents, full-grown animals measuring about two feet in length, belongs to a group of which all the other members are neotropical in distribution.

The great event in the Bird line has been the completion of the new cages for Owls. Under the wholly erroneous notion that these birds of prey are haters of sunlight, they have been housed for many years in that gloomy brick building—the ornithological Newgate as it was not inappropriately styled—where it was useless to attempt to see them. In their new quarters they most emphatically demonstrate their diurnal tastes by sitting in the open the greater part of the day in sunshine or rain, the Barn-Owls being perhaps the species which takes most advantage of the shelter with which the cages are supplied. Appropriately enough the completion of these cages coincides with the presentation by Dr. Macfarlane of a very rare Owl from Lagos, namely, Bouvier's Owl (*Scotopelia bouvieri*), not previously represented in the collection. From the same donor and locality came a Kite, a Buzzard, and a Wood-hawk (*Driotriorchis spectabilis*), the latter almost as rare a bird as the Owl. Two more very valuable additions to our series of raptorial birds are a pair of Kolbe's Vultures (*Gyps kolbii*) from Pretoria, presented by Dr. P. L. Sclater. These are placed alongside specimens of Rüppell's Vulture (*G. rüppellii*), and the Griffon Vulture (*G. fulvus*), so that the differences between these three species of the genus *Gyps* may be clearly seen. They are more fulvous even than *G. fulvus*, and further differ from the other species in having the beak larger and black.

R. I. P.

NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

The Mammals of Great Britain and Ireland. By J. G. MILLAIS, F.Z.S. Vol. II. Longmans, Green & Co.

THE second volume of this great contribution to a knowledge of our British fauna sustains all the interest and beauty of illustration found in its predecessor. The description of the Carnivora is now completed, and that of the Rodentia very largely contributed, the Otter introducing the volume and the Water-Vole completing it. Again we find the same happy compilation of facts relating to our comparatively few mammals, and a similar wealth of illustration, which is not only zoologically accurate, but, as we might infer from the name of the author, is in the best sense artistic. This feature, combined with the easy method of its narrative, should procure the circulation of the work beyond usual zoological circles; and the private library that can possess the luxury of a good county history should certainly, and will in time most probably, find Mr. Millais's volumes on its shelves.

The generic and specific nomenclature used throughout is what is generally recognised as "advanced" by its followers, and often as the "work of museum naturalists" by those who cling to a more conservative terminology. This, however, is a question scarcely raised by the publication, for its strength rests in its descriptive and bionomical elements, and for the critic who would only discuss its classificatory terms the book has indeed been written in vain. Besides which taxonomical nomenclature is not a creed, nor is it based on dogmas; it has not yet reached finality, remains largely dependent on individual method and opinion, and is simply an indispensable and confidential servant to the study of zoology. In British natural history the trend in opinion to-day is "back to nature," and he who writes in this spirit, as Mr. Millais certainly does, writes best. The method has its dangers, as the constant arrival of publications, hot from the press, written by mistaken successors of Gilbert White, abundantly testify; but Darwinism has unwittingly created a similar set of lame disciples, and how many a novelist has thought that he was a reincarnation of Dickens!

There is so much in these pages that we cannot carp at the little they do not contain, and the terms of our notice of the first volume published last year remain, in our opinion, applicable in every way to the present instalment, in which there is neither discontinuity of method nor departure in charm of illustration.

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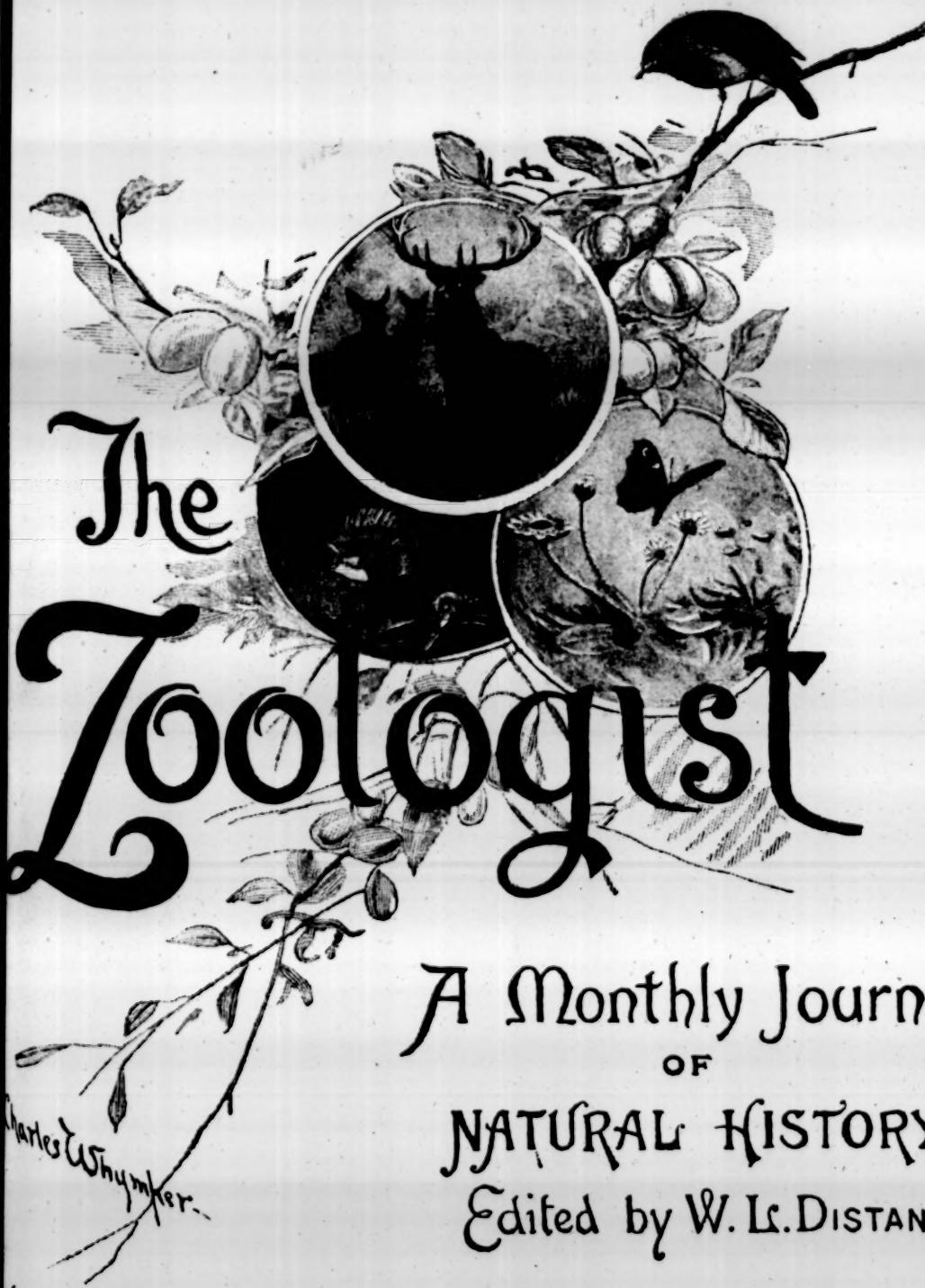
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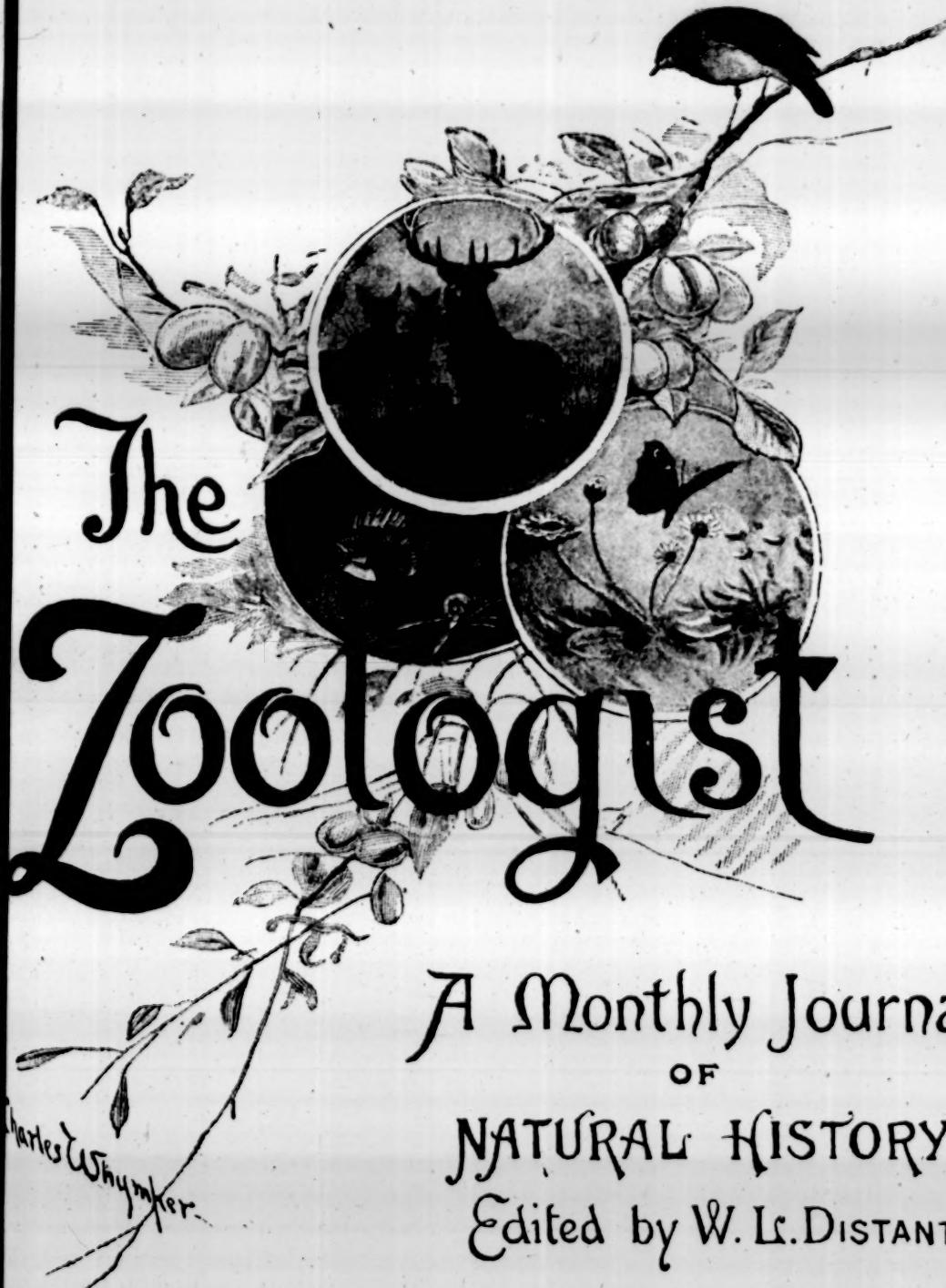
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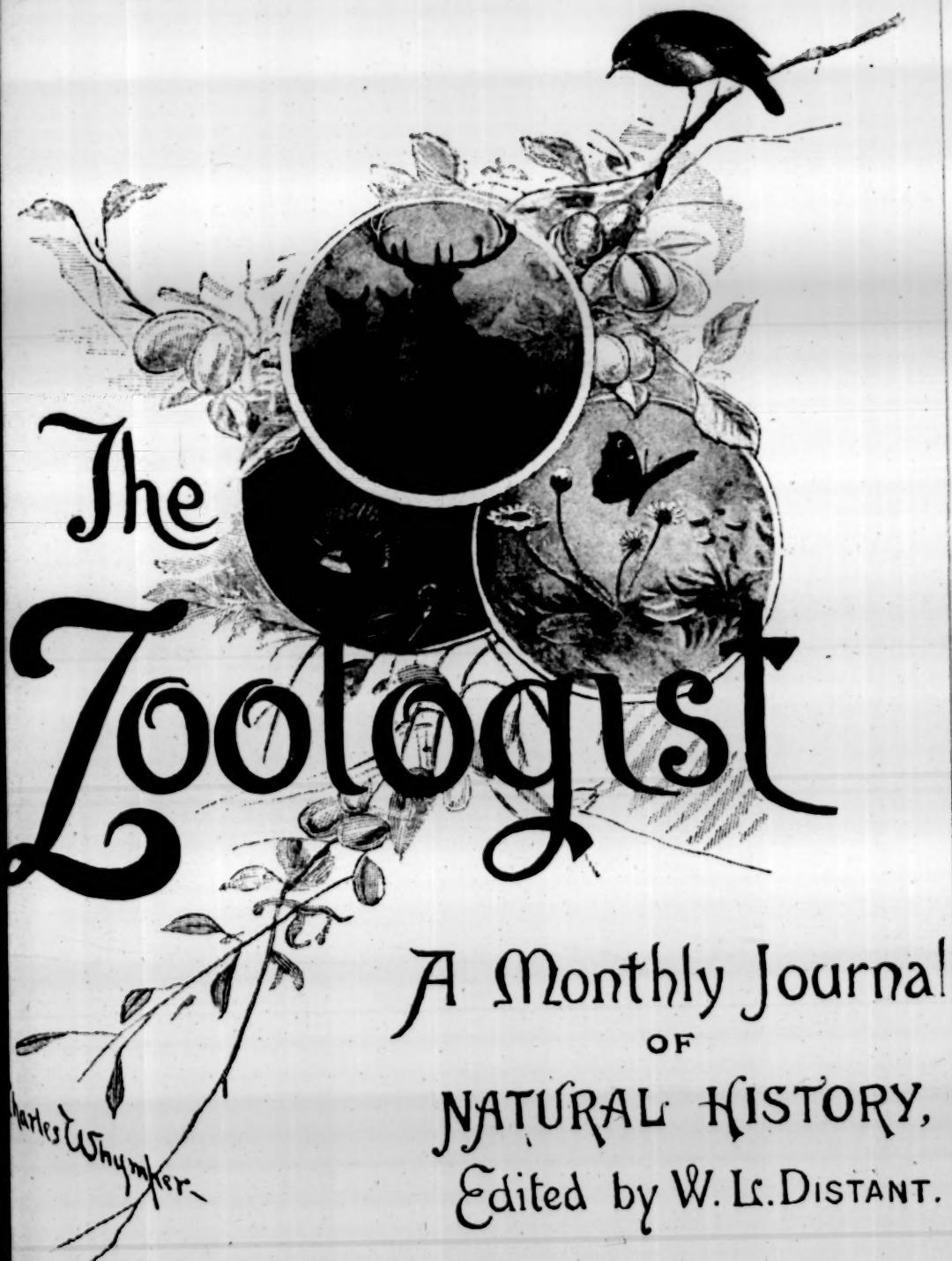
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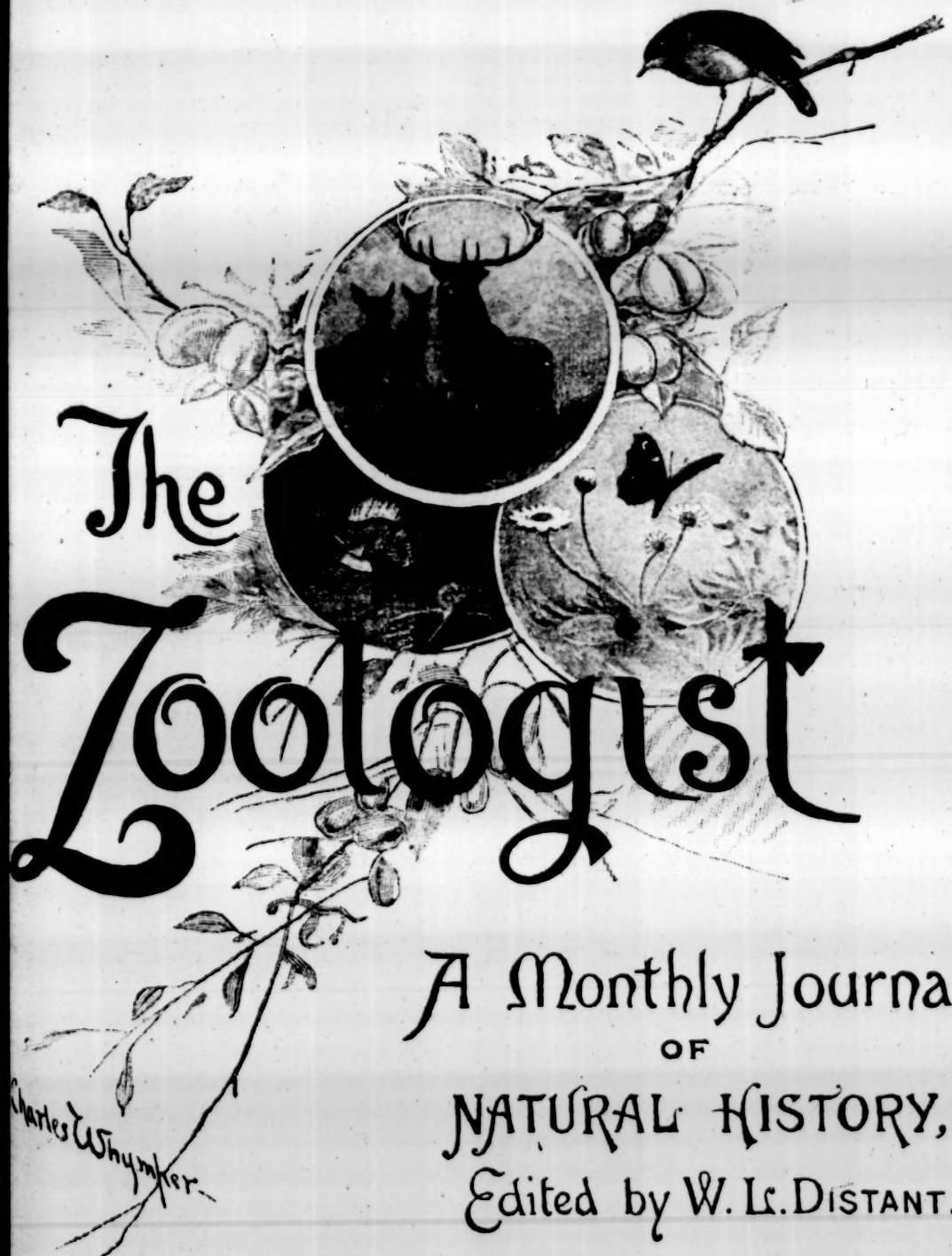
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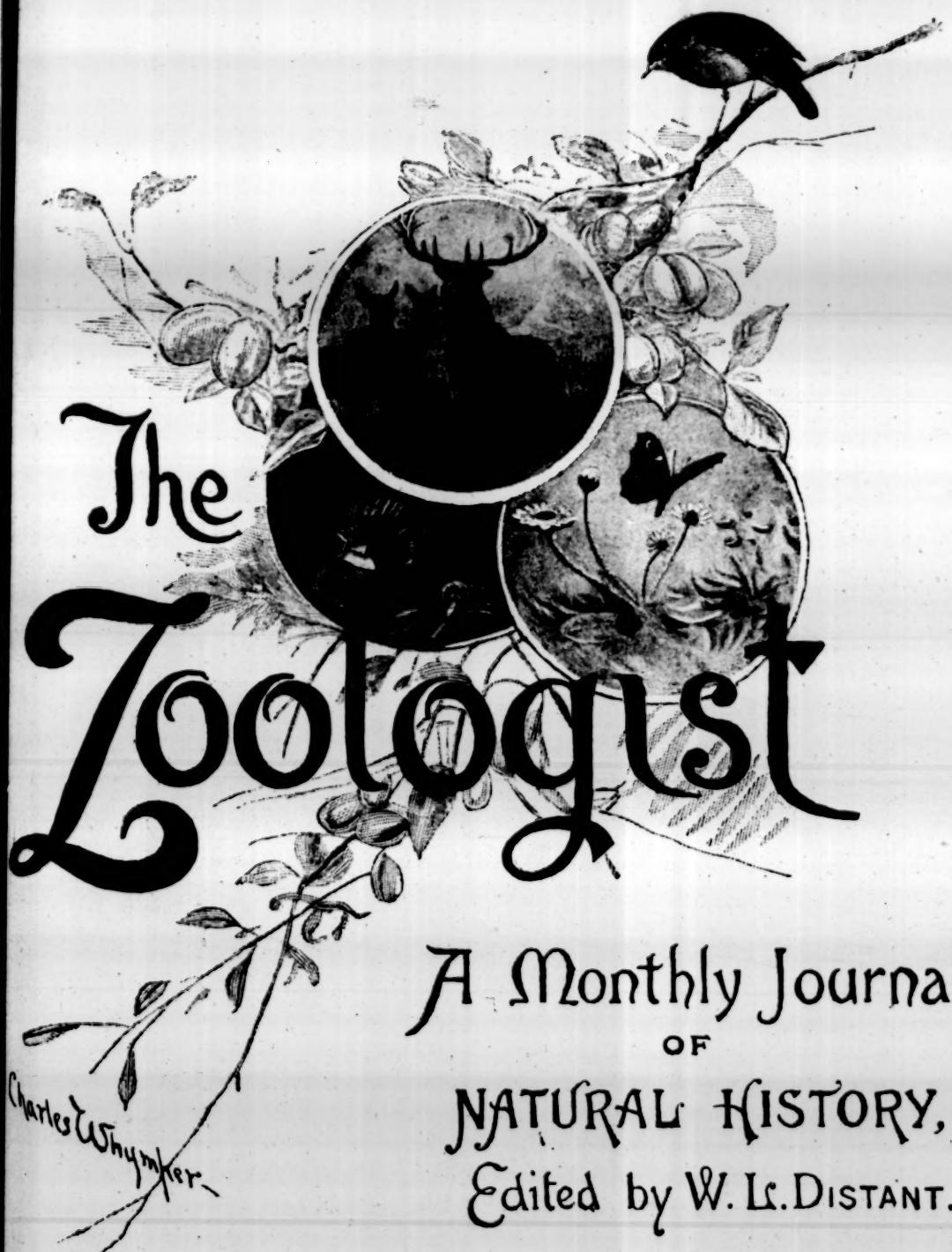
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